20: Hourani S-5 (1945) 1947 M1 Middle East
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in the outer world. About 9,000 of them have settled in the Jazirah since they crossed the frontier from Iraq during the troubles of 1933.[1] A Board of Trustees, appointed by the Council of the League of Nations and administering funds contributed by the Governments concerned and by the League, built villages and bought land for them. At the beginning of 1941, when their economic position was satisfactory, their special administrative and fiscal regime came to an end and they became an integral part of the Syrian State. Since then their economy has been dislocated by the enlistment of a large proportion of their members in the Iraq levies.

Split up between a large number of sects and peoples, none of which dominates the rest, and lacking the element of stability which would be furnished by a long-settled population, the Jazirah presents a complex problem which is intensified by a number of factors: tension between Christians and Moslems and between Arabs and Kurds; the eternal enmity of Beduin and settled folk; the influence of the clergy and particularly of French missionaries; and interference by Turkey from just across the frontier.

During the years of Mandatory rule, French policy was to give the Jazirah strong and sympathetic administration, and so enable the immigrants to settle down in their new homes, and also to keep the Jazirah separate from the rest of Syria. The nationalists, on the other hand, wish to avoid at all costs the creation of another problem similar to that of Jebel Druze or the Alawis; they therefore insist that the district must be ruled from Damascus, sympathetically but without any concession to separatist feeling. Of the inhabitants, some of the Beduin, Kurds, Greek Orthodox and other Christians are in favour of the rule of Damascus, but a large number both of Kurds and of Christians would prefer autonomy under Western protection. The most important advocate of autonomy is the Syrian Catholic Patriarch, Cardinal Tappouni. The Kurdish and Christian autonomists, however, although united in opposition to Arab nationalism, are not in agreement on many other questions.

The Arab Christians

Most of what has been said about the social and economic position of the Christians in the other Arabic countries applies

[1] See Chapter Eleven.

71: Dirini Y-5 (no date) 1958
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Zuleikha gathered her brothers' swords and tools and led them out of the forest. They traveled through cities and villages, until at last they settled in a big city. Her fascinating beauty, and her majestic behaviour adorned with noble grief, earned her the prince of the city as a husband.

* * * * *

The witches, however, did not leave her to live in peace. So when she gave birth to three beautiful sons, the witches substituted three small dogs for them and stole the children from the cradle. So it was believed that the princess Zuleikha had given birth to dogs. The prince did not mind for the first two times; but when she gave birth to a dog for the third time, he determined to suppress his love and desert the bewitched Zuleikha. So she was imprisoned in a cell.

Days passed by, and Zuleikha became used to her cell, and spent her days in praying and begging God to help her. One day, the prince determined to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He passed by his deserted wife and asked if she would like him to bring her anything from Mecca. She answered that she would like to have "The Case of Patience."

Months passed by, and the prince came back with "The Case of Patience." When Zuleikha took the case which was believed to have magic power, she entreated it to redress the wrongs she had suffered, and to punish those who caused her to suffer. The Case flew towards the witches who reared the three sons of Zuleikha, and killed them. As soon as the witches died, the seven bears turned back into men, the sons were restored to their mother, and the prince reconciled himself to his wife.

JOKES ABOUT HOMS

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The people of Homs in Syria are known for their humour and ridiculous simplicity. There is a kind of rivalry betweeen them and the people of Hama, a city nearby, and they make jokes and tales about each other. The following are some of these jests.

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1. Once a citizen of Homs and another of Hama bought two fans. They were friends. That from Hama visited his friend in Homs. It was hot, and so the Homsian brought the fan for his friend to cool himself with. The friend wondered that the fan was still new. The Homsian ex-